

[Richard E. Cohen, Politico](#)

Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) has joined the House Democratic leadership team as the tenth deputy chief whip on a team led by Minority Whip Steny Hoyer.

Welch said in an interview that he plans to expand both his legislative and communication activity. Citing his work in the past Congress on climate-change legislation and in moving his own energy-insulation bill through the House, he highlighted his "common-ground approach to talk about things concretely," including with Republicans.

In recent weeks, Welch has moved quickly among liberal Democrats in defining their position against both the bipartisan lame-duck agreement to extend tax cuts across-the-board, and the House Republicans' vote to repeal the health reform law. "By offering specific alternatives, we create a straight-forward way of how we can talk" to the public, he added. "Communications without legislative action often are words without meaning."

Hoyer praised Welch's work "as a leader in the Democratic Caucus during his four years in office," and said that he brings "an important perspective" as the party focuses on job creation and deficit reduction." Welch said that he expects to discuss soon with Hoyer his specific responsibilities.

For Welch, the leadership position is a welcome alternative to the loss of his seat on the Energy and Commerce Committee. He was one of seven Democrats—all starting their third term—who were bounced from the panel, due to Democrats' minority status and the Republicans' downsizing of committee membership.

Welch has gained an additional slot on the whip team. Earlier, Hoyer announced that Rep. Jim Matheson (D-Utah) had replaced retiring Rep. John Tanner (D-Tenn.) as the Blue Dog representative at the leadership table. The other eight chief deputy whips continued as carry-over members, led by senior chief deputy whip John Lewis (D-Ga.).

